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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

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TAGS: SNAR KCRM PTER CO AUC

SUBJECT: GOC DELIVERS BLOWS TO PARAMILITARIES

REF: BOGOTA 8022

¶11. (SBU) Summary: GOC security forces dealt two major blows to paramilitary forces this month. In early September, elements of an Antinarcotics Police Airmobile Company ("Junglas") seized a large cocaine HCl laboratory believed to belong to the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) in Valle del Cauca Department. On September 18, a task force composed of Colombian National Police and Colombian Air Force elements conducted a successful assault on a major AUC base in Risaralda Department. End Summary.

¶12. (SBU) On September 6, 2004, a Colombian National Police (CNP) Antinarcotics Police Airmobile Company ("Junglas") destroyed a large cocaine HCl laboratory near the municipality of Bugalagrande, Valle del Cauca Department. The Junglas captured 450 kilograms of cocaine base, two metric tons of solid precursors, and 10 MT of liquid precursors. The laboratory and cocaine base are believed to have belonged to elements of the AUC which support the network run by Norte del Valle Cartel trafficker Wilber Varela.

¶13. (SBU) On September 18, a 600-man task force of Colombian Air Force (COLAF) and CNP units attacked and destroyed a major AUC encampment 25 miles northwest of Pereira, in Risaralda Department. Intelligence reports and imagery indicated that as many as 280 AUC members may have been in the camp. The camp was reported to be a base of operations, training facility, and narcotics production facility for the Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB). This was the first operation planned by the CNP's new Operations-Intelligence Center established to target "cabecillas" - FARC, AUC, and ELN leadership targets - and coordinate operations against them.

¶14. (SBU) An airmobile assault on the base camp was preceded by COLAF fixed wing and helicopter gunships and CNP helicopter gunships. Four hundred Rural Mobile Police ("Carabineros") established a perimeter around the base camp to contain fleeing paramilitaries. Over 50 suspected AUC members were captured and an undetermined number wounded or killed. Mopping-up activities were ongoing as of early September 20, but preliminary reports indicate the presence of a large cocaine HCl laboratory and several tons of chemical precursors. GOC security forces suffered no casualties during the assault.

¶15. (SBU) The BCB, which reportedly controls the base camp destroyed in the September 18 operation, is led by Carlos Mario Jimenez, alias "Javier Montanez", aka "Macaco", a participant in the AUC's ongoing demobilization negotiations with the GOC in Santa Fe de Ralito, Cordoba Department (reftel). While AUC leaders participate in peace talks with the GOC, their organizations remain fully engaged in recruitment, training, and narcotics production and trafficking. The GOC has made clear that it will continue to prosecute crimes committed by paramilitary leaders or their associates, even while concentrated in Santa Fe de Ralito. These two attacks are spectacular evidence of that determination.